

# TESTIMONY FOR THE SUPPORT OF RESOLUTIONS 05-014 AND 05-015

## TESTIMONY FOR THE SUPPORT OF RESOLUTIONS 05-014 AND 05-015

My name is Dr Sabina Swift, specialist at the University of Hawaii's College of Tropical Agriculture and Natural Resources. I work with immigrant farmers here on Oahu particularly in the Waialua area.

Last year was really bad for many of the immigrant farmers at Otake and at Mill 6 in Waialua. Irene Rapanan, a Filipino farmer, did not expect to find her Filipino beans (Utong) stolen during the Easter weekend. Phonexay Luongrath, a Lao farmer, reported his bittermelon and cucumber were harvested during the night! And the same week and month, tales of theft of pesticides, farm equipment, and from another farmer's story from Kahuku, anything useful in a farm shed that could be sold were taken away.

The extreme was when a shed of a farmer was burned to the ground.

The most unfortunate thing is that most of the victims of this crime are small, underserved, limited resource farmers that work 1-4 acres of land. These immigrants from Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and the Philippines struggle to support themselves and their families from farming. One hundred dollars worth of stolen produce could mean grocery money for a week for a small family. Do we want to discourage them by not helping solve the agriculture theft problem? Do we want them to collect welfare checks, resort to drug use, or take the law into their own hands?

Besides, we wanted these folks to continue farming, for in the absence of immigrant farmers, I don't believe our agriculture can be truly diversified. Many folks dislike working with the soil. Our farmers, big and small, could only continue what they love to do if there is a nurturing environment from the local governments that emphasize that agriculture is important. **Agriculture is very important!**

The farmers do what they can to protect their properties. With funds and resources from the Mayor and Legislators, a true Ag Crimes Task Force composed of prosecutors, DA investigators, inspectors from the Ag Commissioners Office, and police detectives working as a team will insure that our farmers will not lose their produce and equipment to criminals.

Thank you for listening.

Sabina F. Swift, PhD  
UH/CTAHR/PEPS  
(808) 956-9208  
[sabina@hawaii.edu](mailto:sabina@hawaii.edu)

9 February 2005

RECEIVED

FEB 9 11 31 AM '05

CITY CLERK  
HONOLULU, HAWAII